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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Monday, November 11, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WHY SOME FARM FAMILIES ARE GOOD MANAGERS." Information from Nell Pickens, Alabama Extension Economist in Home Management, given at the Family Living Conference, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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You have only one life to live so make the most of it. That's a piece of advice familiar to everybody. But did you ever stop to think about the families you know, and how much they get out of their one and only life? Did you ever notice that some families get so much more than others on the same amount of money? Or just take the women you know. Ever notice that some of them get happiness and satisfaction from keeping house and caring for a family while others find the same job tiresome and slow? Some do their work quickly and easily; others live up to the old saying that woman's work is never done. You hear people say: "Mrs. So-and-So is a good manager, but poor Mrs. Such-and-Such just can't seem to manage at all."

Well, managing a home is a complicated job. But thousands of women do it well and get a lot of satisfaction out of it. According to Nell Pickens of the Alabama Extension Service, managing a home is complicated because it's a different job with every family. All the experts in the world can't lay down hard and fast rules to suit every family. Each family has its own particular likes and dislikes, habits and customs. And families differ in size, in age, in income, in almost everything you can mention.

So the good manager has a lot to consider. She is not only clever about getting the most for her money, but she knows how to spend both time and money to give her family the most satisfaction and happiness.

Just to show you how the management problem may differ in different families

contrast a cotton farmer's family in the South with a dairy farmer's family in the North. The cotton farmer's money comes in all in one lump at the end of the growing season in August while the dairy farmer's money comes in week by week or at regular intervals the year around. So the cotton farmer's family has to manage carefully to spread that lump of money over the rest of the year, while the dairy farmer's family has less temptation to spend too much at one time. The 2 families not only have a different problem in managing money. They also have a different problem in managing time. During the growing season all the time and energy of the cotton farmer's family must go into cotton. But once the crop is in, the family can give all its time to other work that makes for good living--gardening, canning, cutting wood, making clothes, improving the house. The dairy farmer's family does not have to make such a shift in its work schedule. The dairy work goes on all the year, and gardening, canning, dressmaking and other jobs go along with it.

That's just one illustration of how good management differs with different families.

Good management differs also with families who own and those who rent. Generally the more improvements a family makes on its own farm, the better the management. But a family who rents and moves often may manage more wisely by investing in portable equipment. Some tenant families in the South build portable sinks they can move with their other household goods instead of installing sinks they must leave behind when they move.

The question of investing in modern home improvements may depend also on family likes and dislikes. Some families prefer to do their work in a traditional way and spend their money on other things. Some women get more satisfaction from mixing cake by hand than from using an electric mixer. Some grind their own flour, and knead their bread by hand. These ways may be good management for some families, provided they don't take time and energy needed for other things.

Customs and traditions also come into the picture of wise management of money and time. Celebrations on birthdays and holidays may bring so much pleasure to one family that time and money spent on them is worth while. In another family such celebrations would be largely a waste. The same is true of social gatherings. Families in Alabama enjoy going to "all-day singings" and "fiddlers' conventions" and fishing parties. Time and money spent on these social events may be good managements because they give enjoyment and enable farm people to get together and discuss farm problems. People in other parts of the country prefer other gatherings.

You can see how many considerations come into this problem of home management. But giving all these individual differences their due, good home managers generally will agree on certain things. Most of them agree that the ideal situation for a well-managed home is where husband, wife, and children get together and share responsibilities for planning work, and spending--for both the house and the field.

And most good managers agree that an adequate income, and a regular income are big helps, too. So is health. A family where all members are fit to take their part can do better than one where illness cuts into work, earnings and happiness. Human conservation is as important as conservation of other resources. So labor saving and time saving may be quite as important as saving money. Security is another great help to good management. A family sure of its living and a place in the community can do a better job of managing than one living from day to day and hand to mouth. Then, for wise spending, good shopping facilities are a help. A farm housewife who must buy from the one and only store within reach must accept the prices and stock that one store offers. She can't be as skillful at buying as the woman who can shop around and compare price and quality. Many a farm housewife learned to buy wisely after R.F.D. routes, automobiles and improved roads allowed her to shop by mail, or go farther to different stores.

Still another help to good management is a progressive community. When all the neighbors are interested in better ways of running homes and farms, your family can hardly help getting in the swing. When your boy or girl joins the 4-H Club and comes home full of enthusiasm for keeping home records and getting his farm and home on a business footing, you just naturally agree. And when your nice next-door-neighbor comes over and invites you to go to the home demonstration club with her to hear a talk on managing a home--well, you see how the community can help.

These are a few of the reasons why one farm family manages better than another on the same income.

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